

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

FREEDOM AND TORAH are interrelated. True freedom does not mean living without any restrictions, without any moral rules, without divine direction. This is anarchy. The Exodus—the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian enslavement—did not by itself make the people truly free. The giving of Torah did. The divine words of Torah—in their most precise and essential formulation—were presented openly, clearly, in concrete readable script, on the Tablets of the Decalogue. They were, to use Scripture's term (Ex. 32:16), *harut*, incised, inscribed indelibly, on the Tablets. This Hebrew term *harut*—which indicates fixity and concreteness—is related in rabbinic literature to a similar term, *herut*, which means freedom. There is no *herut* without *harut*. No freedom without the permanently inscribed words of Torah. No freedom without the stability of moral direction. No freedom without Torah.

Candlelight time 5:54 Sabbath ends 6:48

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, Feb. 26:

TETZAVEH: Exodus 27:20-30:10; Deuteronomy 25:17-19

HAFTARAH: I Samuel 15:2-34

Fast of Esther: Monday, Feb. 28

PURIM: Tuesday, Feb. 29

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

ESTHER is a symbol and victim of the tragedy of galut, existence under foreign rule. Taken by force into the king's palace, she conceals her noble origin and refrains from enhancing her beauty in order to diminish her chances to be elected.

Unable to resist, yet also unwilling to comply, she resigns with total apathy to her tragic fate. Even at her triumphant moment—pleading before the king—she despicably submits to enslavement, begging for protection rather than freedom, mercy rather than justice: "For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, massacred and exterminated. Had we only been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept silent (7:4.)" Reflecting the degradation of galut, the climax of the Megilla thus matches the conclusion of Torah's description of galut: "There you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but none will buy (28:68)."

Thought of the Week

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

PURE OLIVE OIL (*shemen zayit zakh*; Ex. 27:20) was used in the Temple for kindling the lights of the Menorah. Pure olive oil serves as a symbol of Israel — illustrating the people's most distinguished qualities: purity, survivability and separability: Like the olive, Israel produces its pure spiritual gifts under pressure; like the olive, Israel is beaten and ground up, and remains indestructible; like olive oil, Israel does not commingle and remains separate.

Thus Jeremiah describes Israel (11:16): "a verdant olive tree, beautiful to behold, with choice fruit..." As the olive oil serves to bring sacred light, so is Israel destined to bring spiritual light to the world. It can do so by remaining special, firmly rejecting all forms of assimilation — cherishing its uniqueness and distinction.

Thought of the Week
By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE TEMPLE OF THE FUTURE – the third to be built on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem – as anticipated, in our inmost messianic yearnings, will not be constructed by human enterprise. Rashi (1040-1105) so envisions (Suka 41a): “The future Temple we eagerly await, all built and complete, will appear and descend from Heaven; as it says (Ex. 15:17); ‘(This) Temple, O Lord, will be established by Your hands.’” This amazing theory is intimated in Midrash (Tanhuma on Ex. 39:33), applying to the future Temple the Psalmist’s acclaim (92:5): “In ‘Your Handiwork’ I will rejoice” (cf. Tos. Shevuot 15b). In nahem, an old Talmudic prayer for the restoration of the Temple (recited on Tisha-B’Av), a similar sentiment is expressed (Yerushalmi Ber. 4:3): “For You, O Lord, with fire did consume it, and with fire You are expected to rebuild it.” In Rashi’s view, this may literally refer to the supernatural recreation of this Divine “handiwork” – in heavenly fire. Whatever the implications of Rashi’s vision for the reality and quality of the Temple of the future may be, the lesson for the present is pertinent and clear: -We do not plan to remove any other shrine now standing on the sacred spot and replace it with ours. Rebuilding the future Temple is not within our human domain. This we leave entirely to God.

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, Feb. 18:

TETZAVEH: Exodus 27:20-30:10

HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 43:10-27

Thought of the Week

Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

TETZAVEH -- PURIM

March 8, 2001

BELLS RINGING IN THE JEWISH TEMPLE (Ex. 28:33): Golden bells adorning the robe of the High Priest would ring to herald his entrance to the place of holiness. These rings serve as a polite gesture of asking permission and giving notice before entering the holy domain.

From this sacred custom the Sages drew a general lesson in mannerly conduct: One must never enter any private domain -- even not one's own home, when others may be there -- without first knocking on the door, ringing the door bell, and being granted permission. For every private domain is sacred - likened to the Holy Temple. Any invasion of a person's privacy -- even of one's own spouse or children -- is not only rude but also sacrilegious; it is an offense to both the dignity of the individual and the sanctity of God. We must revere every human person as a model of divinity, and every human dwelling as a Temple.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

INCENSE—the ritual burning of aromatic spices was part of the daily sacred service in the ancient Jewish Temple. Performed each morning and evening, in connection with the tending and lighting of the Menorah, this ritual (called “ketoret” in Hebrew) symbolizes the ardor and fervor of religious devotion and enthusiasm. For example: heartfelt, ecstatic, and passionate prayer is compared to the intoxicating, sweet, and warm fragrance of the sacred incense. But religious zeal must be controlled and directed by wisdom and understanding. Therefore, the incense rite was performed in the Temple under the light and presence of the Menorah, the symbol of divine wisdom.

Candlelight time 5:39 Sabbath ends 6:33

Scriptural reading for Saturday, Feb. 14:

TETZAVEH: Exodus 27:20-30:10

HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 43:10-27

THE CLEVELAND JEWISH NEWS Friday, March 5, 1971

Candelight time 6:03 Sabbath ends 6:57

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, Feb. 26

TETZAVEH: Exodus 27:20-30:10

HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 43:10-27

Purim: Wednesday night and Thursday

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK: *The sidra introduces a primary Temple symbol, light. The Temple is ordained to be perpetually illuminated with pure and constant light, "ner tamid." (Ex. 27:20) What is this light for? "God does not need the light," stressed the Talmud (Menahot 86 b); men do. This idea is dramatized by the unique architecture of the windows in Solomon's Temple. For reasons of security and seclusion, windows of ancient shrines were usually built wide within and narrow without. The windows of the Temple, in contrast, were narrow within and wide without (I Kings 6:4) — projecting to the outside. The design of the Temple is symbolic of its true objective — not to enshrine Divinity, but to enrich humanity. Far from being an exclusive sealed-off domain, the Temple of Israel was established to be exposed to the world as a source of enlightenment and inspiration. Recalling our responsibility to eradicate evil, on Shabbat Zachor (Remember!), we realize that only by light, darkness is conquered.*

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

Candlelight time 5:43 · Sabbath ends 6:37

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, Feb. 17:

TETZAVEH: Exodus 27:20-30:10

HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 43:10-27

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

LIGHT, as a primary Temple symbol, is introduced in Exodus (27:20). The Temple is to be perpetually illuminated with pure and constant light ("ner tamid"). "God does not need the light" (Menahot 86b), but man does. This idea is dramatized by the unique architecture of the Temple's windows. For reasons of security and seclusion, windows of ancient shrines were usually built wide within and narrow without. The windows of the Temple, in contrast, were narrow within and wide without (I Kings 6:4)—projecting to the outside. The design of the Temple is symbolic of its true objective—not to enshrine Divinity, but to enrich humanity.

Thought of the Week

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

NER TAMID: The so-called “perpetual lamp” or “eternal light” before the Ark, in today’s synagogues, has its origin in the *ner tamid* of the ancient Temple (Ex. 27:20-21; Lev. 24:2-3): The menorah, in front of the curtain concealing the Holy of Holies, had to be kept constantly kindled. The key word is *tamid*, “which is not an adjective but an adverb, referring not to the lamp or the light, but to the human act of lighting it regularly.

Objects are never “eternal” or “perpetual” – even as they are sacred. However, human devotion to ideals ought to be kept constant – *tamid*. The only viable “eternal light” is the one burning within our souls.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE HOLY VESSELS in the inner part of the Sanctuary in the biblical Temple were three: the lamp, the table, and the altar. The lamp, the Menorah of seven branches, was made of one piece of gold, and with its constant light symbolized wisdom and enlightenment. The table, the Shulhan, crafted of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold, symbolized wealth and plenty. The altar, the Mizbeah, was not for slaughtering but for burning incense; it symbolized spiritual fortitude (Ex. 30:7): "On this altar Aaron shall burn incense of sweet spices. Each morning when he cleanses the lamps of the Menorah, he shall offer the burning incense." Light and aroma combined to convey the human sense of the sacred.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yeñuda

WHAT DOES MITZVA MEAN? The core meaning of the word mitzva is the word line. The verb "tzaveh" means to draw a line: to show, delineate, prescribe and order a line of conduct; hence, to guide, direct charge and bequeath. The noun mitzva means: guideline, outline, directive, precept and bequest. In Jewish outlook the terms Torah and mitzva are parallel and complementary; both express the revealed Teaching. Torah, in its general sense, refers to the concepts and principles of the Teaching; mitzva, in its particular sense, to the practical details of the Teaching to be realized in human life. Torah is the Light; mitzva, the Lamp—the behavioral vehicle which sustains and contains the Light. Torah is "theory" which is fulfilled by mitzva as "reality." Another rabbinic interpretation views Torah and mitzva as synonyms, both aspects of the divine, living Teaching: Torah, in its literal sense, refers to the Written Text—Scripture. Mitzva, in its conceptual sense, refers to the Oral Torah—Tradition. The term mitzva—as related to "tzava'ah," namely will and testament, bequeathment—is thus perceived as the people's dynamic, ongoing legacy: Torah, the Books; mitzva, the Heritage. In Judaism, a mitzva is neither a dry and mute, legalistic "commandment," nor a boneless, pliable and discretionary "good deed," determined by personal taste and mood. By mitzva, Torah comes alive.

Scriptural reading for Saturday, March 10:

TETZAVEH: Exodus 27:20-30:10; Deuteronomy 25:17-19

HAFTARAH: I Samuel 15:1-34

Shabbat Zachor

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, Feb. 14:

TETZAVEH: Exodus 27:20-30:10

HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 43:10-27

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

ETERNAL LIGHT ("ner tamid;" Ex. 27:20) is a symbol of Jewish living: the flame must burn continually. The expression of one's Jewishness is not confined to the synagogue, or to so-called "religious" observance; it is an evergrowing, all-pervasive experience. It is a constant, never-ending process of sanctifying and elevating life by clinging to the will of God.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

IS RITUAL PRIMARY IN JUDAISM? Samuel is the first in the line of prophets to renounce the alleged primacy of ritual: "Has the Lord any desire for burnt offerings or sacrifices? Only for adherence to the voice of the Lord! Truly, to understand is better than sacrifice; to hearken better than to offer fat of rams! For as faulty as magic is disobedience; as false as "teraphim" (small household idols), stubbornness!" (I Sam. 15:22-23). The prophet disclaims the prevalent notion that God desires, or derives any delight or pleasure from, the sacrificial rite. In contrast to ritual per se, obedience to God is virtuous; it shows human devotion and leads to human refinement and elevation. The prophet, however, does not dismiss ritual altogether, only the popular presumption of its primacy. Ritual has always been an integral part of worship; but it has its value, claims the prophet, only if performed in adherence to God's will. Ritual is not an end, only a vehicle by which we are enabled to express and experience our love and devotion to God, by clinging to His will. This theme is further developed by the prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah (2nd half of 8th century B.C.E.) who contrast ritual with ethics. They insist that the ethics of social justice and human compassion is supreme, superseding ritual.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE JEWISH ATTITUDE toward wealth is illustrated in Torah's guidelines for building and maintenance of the Temple. Two Talmudic sayings (Menahot 89a) are complementary. The first calls for generous expenditure: "Poverty does not befit an abode of richness." The second calls for moderation: "Torah spares the people's money." The first proverb shows respect for the Temple; symbolizing the glory of God; it is "an abode of richness." The second proverb shows consideration for the people by trying to ease their financial burden. The result is a balancing blend of beauty and dignity displayed in the Temple, achieving splendor without extravagance and simplicity without deprivation.

This economic policy of moderate spending conveys a lesson for all to enjoy wealth and avoid waste. Judaism neither despises nor venerates Mammon (wealth), but considers it a Divine blessing, to use for human enjoyment and good deeds.

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

WEALTH AND SANCTITY: Torah's economic policy on the use of wealth for the building and maintenance of the Temple is expressed in two complementary sayings. One advocates generous expenditure and the other moderation (Talmud Bavli, *Menahot* 89a). The first rule states, "Poverty does not befit an abode of richness." Poverty due to frugality has no place in the Temple, which is, metaphorically and spiritually "an abode of richness." This rule shows respect for the Temple as symbol of God's glory. The second rule is: "Torah spares the people's money." This rule shows consideration for the people's financial burden. The Temple thus displayed a balanced blend of beauty and dignity; splendor without extravagance, simplicity without deprivation.

This conveys a lesson for all to enjoy wealth

CLEVELAND JEWISH NEWS / FEBRUARY 26, 1999

but avoid waste.

Ner tamid is the Hebrew term for the "perpetual lamp" (known also as the "eternal light") that is usually placed before the ark in the modern synagogue. It has its origin in the *ner tamid* of the ancient Temple (Ex. 27:20-21; Lev. 24:2-3). The *menorah* in front of the curtain concealing the Holy of Holys was kept kindled constantly. Biblically, the key word, *tamid*, serves as both adverb and adjective. It describes not only the lamp or light but, more emphatically, the human act of lighting it regularly.

Objects, even if they are used in our worship of God, are never truly in themselves "eternal" or "perpetual." Only human devotion to ideals ought to be kept constant (*tamid*). The only "eternal light" is the one burning within our souls.

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

CLEVELAND JEWISH NEWS / FEBRUARY 21, 1997

RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

THE USE OF WEALTH is illustrated in Torah's fiscal policy for the building and maintenance of the temple. Two talmudic sayings (Menahot 89a) are complementary. The first calls for generous expenditure: "Poverty does not benefit (*the temple which is*) an abode of (*spiritual*) richness." The second calls for moderation: "Torah protects (*saves*) the people's money." The first proverb shows respect for the temple; symbolizing the glory of God, it is "an abode of richness." The second proverb shows consideration for the people; trying to ease their financial burden. The result is a balancing blend of beauty and dignity displayed in the architecture, services and upkeep of the temple; achieving splendor without extravagance and simplicity without deprivation.

This economic policy of moderate spending and prudent saving, conveys a lesson for all - to enjoy wealth and avoid waste. Judaism neither despises nor venerates *mammon* - money and wealth - but considers it a Divine blessing, to use for human enjoyment and good deeds.

Golden bells were ringing in the Jewish temple (Ex. 28:33). As the high priest would enter the place of utmost holiness in the temple (*kodesh ha-kodashim*), the golden bells adorning his robe would ring. These ringing bells would reassure the temple audience that their emissary is alive and well and officiating. They also served as a gesture of asking permission, giving notice, before entering the most holy domain. From this sacred custom

our sages drew a general lesson in civil behavior. One must never enter any private domain - even his own home, when others may be there! - without first knocking on the door, ringing the doorbell, and receiving permission. For every private domain is sacred - like the holy temple. Any invasion of privacy, besides being rude, is also sacrilegious, an offense to God. For a human individual represents divinity and a human dwelling - a temple.

Thought of the Week

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

THE USE OF WEALTH: Torah's economic policy for the construction and maintenance of the Temple is defined in the Talmud (*Menahot 89a*) by two complementary sayings: One calls for generous expenditure, for "Poverty does not befit an abode of richness." The other calls for moderation, for "Torah is protective of the people's money." Whereas the first rule shows respect for the Temple, a symbol of God's glory ("an abode of richness"), the second shows consideration for the people, sparing their money, and easing their financial burden. The Temple displays a balancing blend of beauty and dignity, achieving simplicity without deprivation, splendor without extravagance.

In Judaism, *Mamon* (money) is neither despised nor venerated. Wealth is treated as a Divine blessing to be used for human enjoyment and good deeds.

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

THE SANCTITY OF PRIVACY is illustrated by Torah's laws of bells ringing in the Jewish Temple (Ex. 28:33): Golden bells, adorning the robe of the High Priest, would ring to herald his entrance to the place of holiness. These rings serve as a polite gesture of asking permission and giving notice before entering the holy domain.

From this sacred custom the sages drew a general lesson in mannerly conduct. One must never enter any private domain – not even one's own home (when others may be there) – without knocking on the door or ringing the doorbell and being granted invitation. For every private domain is sacred; likened to the Holy Temple. Any invasion of a person's privacy – even of one's

5 CLEVELAND JEWISH NEWS / MARCH 6, 1998

spouse or children – is rude and sacrilegious; an offense to both the dignity of the individual and the sanctity of God.

True respect for family, for the sacred bond of family members, is demonstrated by the Deuteronomic law (24:16) declaring that parents are not to be executed (punished by law) *for* children, nor children *for* parents. The elliptic preposition "for" entails a dual meaning: (1) because of their conduct, advocating individual responsibility; and (2) because of their testimony, promoting family cohesiveness. Parents and children must not be asked to testify against one another or be allowed to disclose any private communication between them. Privacy is sacred.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

REMEMBERING AMALEK OR OBLITERATING HIS MEMORY? Torah insists (Deut. 25:17-18):

Remember, what (the people of) Amalek did to you on your way out of Egypt: How they met you on the way and, attacking you from the rear, they cut off all those who lagged behind, while you were tired and exhausted. For they had no fear of God. Therefore, when God gives you peace—do not forget!

Torah mentions the idea of remembrance twice. First in the imperative: Remember! (Zakhor!) Then, in striking contrast, in the negative sense: Obliterate the memory (zekher) of Amalek. The “memory” of Amalek in the latter phrase refers to his impact, his potential viability. How do we make sure that Amalekism will be obliterated in the future? By always remembering what Amalek did in the past. The “Never-Again” is contingent on “Do Not Forget!”